

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1. (Currently amended) An image classification apparatus for classifying image data sets added with accompanying information including information items, the image classification apparatus comprising:

a server, the server including:

accompanying information obtaining ~~means~~ device for obtaining the accompanying information from the image data sets;

information item specification ~~means~~ device for specifying a portion of or all of the information items of the accompanying information to be used for image classification, and for specifying priority among the specified information items; and

image classification ~~means~~ device for classifying the image data sets into groups having a hierarchical structure of the specified information items according to the specified priority, where the image data sets are stored in a folder associated with the information item of the lowest level in the hierarchical structure.

2. (Currently amended) The image classification apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the accompanying information includes classification condition information representing a set of the information items to be used for image classification and

the information item specification ~~means~~ device specifies the information items to be used for image classification according to the classification condition information.

3. (Original) The image classification apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the accompanying information includes at least one of items comprising time and date of photography, a photography condition, a

photography location, a size of an image, the type of a subject, the name of the subject, the number of objects as the subject, an event, and a comment, as the information items thereof.

4. (Currently amended) The image classification apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the accompanying information includes classification condition information representing a combination of the information items to be used for image classification and the priority thereof, and

the information item specification ~~means~~ device specifies the information items to be used for image classification and the priority thereof, according to the classification condition information.

5. (Original) The image classification apparatus according to claim 4, wherein the accompanying information includes at least one of items comprising time and date of photography condition, a photography location, a size of an image, the type of a subject, the name of the subject, the number of the objects as the subject, an event, and a comment, as the information items thereof.

6. (Original) The image classification apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the accompanying information includes at least one of items comprising time and date of photography, a photography condition, a photography location, a size of an image, the type of a subject, the name of the subject, the number of objects as the subject, an event, and a comment, as the information items thereof.

7. (Previously presented) A method for classifying image data sets added with accompanying information including information items, the method comprising the steps of :

obtaining the accompanying information from the image data sets;  
specifying a portion of or all of the information items of the  
accompanying information to be used for image classification and for specifying  
priority among the specified information items; and

classifying the image data sets into groups having a hierarchical  
structure of the specified information items according to the specified priority,  
where the image data sets are stored in a folder associated with the information  
item of the lowest level in the hierarchical structure.

8. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 7, wherein the  
accompanying information includes classification condition information  
representing a set of the information items to be used for image classification,  
and

the step of specifying the information items is the step of specifying the  
information items to be used for image classification according to the  
classification condition information.

9. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 8, wherein the  
accompanying information includes at least one of items comprising time and  
date of photography, a photography condition, a photography location, a size of  
an image, the type of a subject, the name of the subject, the number of objects  
as the subject, an event, and a comment, as the information items thereof.

10. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 7, wherein the  
accompanying information includes classification condition information  
representing a combination of the information items to be used for image  
classification and the priority thereof, and

the step of specifying the information items and the priority is the step of specifying the information items to be used for image classification and the priority thereof, according to the classification condition information.

11. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 10, wherein the accompanying information includes at least one of items comprising time and date of photography, a photography condition, a photography location, a size of an image, the type of a subject, the name of the subject, the number of objects as the subject, and event, and a comment, as the information items thereof.

12. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 7, wherein the accompanying information includes at least one of items comprising time and date of photography, a photography condition, a photography location, a size of an image, the type of a subject, the name of the subject, the number of objects as the subject, an event, and a comment, as the information items thereof.

13. (Currently amended) A tangible computer readable recording medium storing thereon a program for causing a computer to execute a method for classifying image data sets added with accompanying information including information items, the method comprising the steps of:

obtaining the accompanying information from the image data steps;  
specifying a portion of or all of the information items of the accompanying information to be used for image classification and for specifying priority among the specified information items; and

classifying the image data sets into groups having a hierarchical structure of the specified information items according to the specified priority, where the image data sets are stored in a folder associated with the information item of the lowest level in the hierarchical structure.

14. (Currently amended) The tangible computer readable recording medium according to claim 13, wherein the accompanying information includes classification condition information representing a set of the information items to be used for image classification, and

the step of specifying the information items is the step of specifying the information items to be used for image classification according to the classification condition information.

15. (Currently amended) The tangible computer readable recording medium according to claim 14, wherein the accompanying information includes at least one of items comprising time and date of photography, a photography condition, a photography location, a size of an image, the type of a subject, the name of the subject, the number of objects as the subject, an event, and a comment, as the information items thereof.

16. (Currently amended) The tangible computer readable recording medium according to claim 13, wherein the accompanying information includes classification condition information representing a combination of the information items to be used for image classification and the priority thereof, and

the step of specifying the information items and the priority is the step of specifying the information items to be used for image classification condition information.

17. (Currently amended) The tangible computer readable recording medium according to claim 16, wherein the accompanying information includes at least one of items comprising time and date of photography, a photography condition, a photography location, a size of an image, the type of a subject, an event, and a comment, as the information items thereof.

18. (Currently amended) The tangible computer readable recording medium according to claim 13, wherein the accompanying information includes at least one of items comprising time and date of photography, a photography condition, a photography location, a size of an image, the type of a subject, the name of the subject, the number of objects as the subject, an event, and a comment, as the information items thereof.

19. (Previously Presented) The image classification apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the hierarchical structure of each of the groups has a plurality of layers,

wherein a lower layer in the hierarchical structure is associated with a group having a lower order of priority; and

wherein an image data set is classified into a group in the lowest layer of the hierarchical structure, the lower layer being a layer corresponding to the information item that has the lowest order of priority among the information items included in the accompanying information.

20. (Currently amended) The tangible computer readable recording medium according to claim 13, wherein the hierarchical structure of each of the groups has a plurality of layers,

wherein a lower layer in the hierarchical structure is associated with a group having a lower order of priority; and

wherein an image data set is classified into a group in the lowest layer of the hierarchical structure, the lower layer being a layer corresponding to the information item that has the lowest order of priority among the information items included in the accompanying information.

21. (Currently amended) The image classification apparatus of claim 19, wherein the image classification ~~means-device~~ automatically creates the groups having the hierarchical structure of the specified information items according to the specified priority.

22. (Previously presented) The image classification apparatus of claim 1, wherein the information item is arbitrarily designated by a user.

23. (Currently amended) The image classification apparatus of claim 19,

wherein the hierarchical structure has a plurality of layers, and wherein each of the plurality of layers is associated with one specified information item, each of said specified information items being associated with the priority,

wherein each of the layers of the hierarchical structure is associated with a different priority, and

wherein the image classification ~~means-device~~ classifies the image data sets into groups based on the priority associated with each of said specified information items.